

Testimony of Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby
Senate Confirmation Hearings
for
Neal A. McCaleb
June, 2001

It is a pleasure to provide testimony to this Committee relating to its consideration of Mr. Neal A. McCaleb as assistant secretary-Indian affairs in the U.S. Department of the Interior. I hope that these comments will be beneficial to the Committee in making this important decision.

Before I begin my comments, please allow me this opportunity to extend sincere appreciation for being allowed to have input into this Committee's work. The task of the Committee is not an easy one, but it is indeed an important one.

I take this opportunity at the very beginning to state that the Chickasaw Nation, as a whole, is very pleased that the president has placed his faith in Mr. Neal A. McCaleb for the job of assistant secretary. It is always a special recognition for an entire nation when one of its own is so honored.

Speaking for myself, it is both an honor and also an obligation which I gladly accept, to speak with you about the person nominated by the president to serve as the assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior for Indian affairs.

It is an honor because I have been acquainted with Neal McCaleb for about 20 years. As a citizen of the Chickasaw Nation, Neal McCaleb has served his tribe and his state in numerous capacities. He has received-- and answered-- the call to public service. Like each of you through your own service to the people, Neal McCaleb has placed the needs of others above his own. He has served Oklahoma in several capacities, including being the state's first secretary of transportation. He also served four terms of office in the Oklahoma State Legislature and on President Ronald Reagan's Commission on Indian Reservation Economies.

When the Chickasaw Nation was engaged in negotiations with the state government of Oklahoma to arrive at an historic agreement for motor fuels taxes, Neal McCaleb was instrumental in the process. While being a sitting state official, he provided great educational services to other state officials relating to tribal sovereignty, walking the tightrope of being both a state official and a citizen of a Native American nation. His integrity not only served Native Americans, but the state as well, since his allegiance to his official responsibilities never wavered.

He has proven his value on many levels, including service to his tribe. He currently holds a seat on the board of directors of the Chickasaw Nation Bank, now being formed by the tribe. His leadership in that capacity is allowing us to be one of the first tribes to charter its own bank. We shall miss his service in that regard.

As a 1999 inductee into the Chickasaw Nation Hall of Fame, Neal McCaleb's numerous contributions to his tribe and to his state were formally recognized by his fellow citizens. He is the quality and caliber of citizen in whom we all take pride.

I said earlier that my testimony is also an obligation. I consider voicing my opinion an obligation because it is my duty to encourage your consideration of the person I believe will do the best job for Indian Country. Over the years, Neal McCaleb and I have had a good professional working relationship. He has done a credible job in each and every position he has held, public or private.

His experiences can only bring benefits to Indian Country by virtue of his ability to understand the needs of Indian Country for infrastructure development and continuation of programs to provide safe and decent housing, health care, jobs, educational opportunities and improvements at all stages. I believe in Mr. Neal McCaleb.

I believe that he is fair and accurate in his assessment of the needs of the public, both Indian and non-Indian. As surely as Neal McCaleb has served his Chickasaw people so well, so will he serve all native peoples. As a citizen of the United States of America, the state of Oklahoma and of the unconquered and unconquerable Chickasaw Nation, he shall serve us all well.

Based upon my experiences with him, I believe that Neal McCaleb will do all that he can to continue the traditions of good relations between United States and tribal governments. I believe that he will do a great job for all of us.

Based upon his history of public service to a state which, coincidentally, also happens to be one of the most densely populated by Native Americans, and because he, too, is a Native American, Neal A. McCaleb is a good man for the job.

Thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to provide these comments. I wish you every success in the tasks which lie before you. Your consideration of the appointment of Neal A. McCaleb will be appreciated across the nation. Thank you.